

BURNOUTS

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(1) Burnouts. We have all seen them hanging around schools, pizza joints, video arcades. They are the kids who sniffed too much glue, popped too many pills, and smoked too many joints. They thought they could handle their drugs, but actually their bodies couldn't cope with the substances.

(2) Surveys indicate that two out of three high school students have had some experience with illegal drugs such as alcohol, marijuana, speeders, or cocaine. Even though the rate of usage is steadily decreasing, many teens still use drugs regularly. Most, like my friend John, use the drugs for an immediate sensation; they do not think of the long-term effects.

(3) John started abusing drugs like many other teens do. First he used alcohol, then marijuana, which led to speeders and eventually cocaine. Alcohol was stimulating enough to him for about a year, then he began smoking pot for an immediate escape to a fantasy dreamland. When he decided he needed something in the mornings to perk him up from this dreamy state of mind, he started using speeders. He lived happily on pot, alcohol, and speed every day for several years. But after doing this routine for so long, he found that he no longer got the feeling of ecstasy, so he sought an even stronger drug, cocaine.

(4) After John began smoking marijuana, he would show common immediate effects like a faster heart rate, bloodshot eyes, a dry mouth and throat, thirst, and a craving to munch. He would also laugh for no reason at all and carry on unclear conversations. His coordination and reflexes would be slowed, and concentrating was often difficult. Now, like others, John realizes the long-term effects due to regular abuse of marijuana--loss of fertility, difficulty during sexual relations and a tendency to pick up illnesses due to damage to his immune system.

(5) The immediate effects John and other teens noticed after they used stimulants such as speed and cocaine were more serious than those of marijuana. He would show signs of a rapid heartbeat and breathing, high blood pressure, and dilated pupils. Physical side effects included sweating, headaches, blurred vision, dry mouth, dizziness, and insomnia. He experienced feelings of anxiety, and his friends would notice that he was often agitated, worried, restless, suspicious, and

hostile even towards them.

(6) Even after feeling these effects, most teens aren't aware of how dangerous stimulants are to the bodily processes. John suffered from malnutrition, ulcers, depression, and hallucinations, but luckily he was hospitalized with these symptoms before they might have led him into the ultimate danger of abusing stimulants--death. Other acquaintances of mine weren't as lucky as John. One friend took such a heavy dose that it caused brain and organic damage which did eventually lead to his death. Another took a high enough dosage that it caused him to hallucinate spiders crawling all over him; he panicked and committed suicide. These three examples of teen drug abusers and the effects they suffered only begin the story: the lucky teens are those who recognize their problem and seek medical treatment; the unlucky ones die.

(7) Substance abuse produces dangerous effects. Despite this fact, too many people still use illegal drugs. Today, increased use of clinics and programs set up to help such abusers show that people are starting to wise up about illegal drugs. I only wish that other drug abusers such as John and my other two friends had sought help earlier.